



Department of State June Conference on Program Evaluation (7–8 June 2011)

Retooling Our Ways of Engagement: Building a New Architecture for 21st Century Diplomacy

Distinguished colleagues and participants,

First let me thank you for the opportunity to be present here at this conference and to share with you the experience we have gained with our institution's recent reform process.

For the last 30 years, Switzerland's Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (– this is how our Department of State is called) has changed little. But in the last 5 years, it has been completely reshaped. What happened?

I will mention a handful of challenges faced by Swiss Foreign Policy in the 21st century, which required response from our side:

1. The shift in economic and political power towards Asia forced us to reshape our bilateral relations. In addition to relations with the EU and its member states, Swiss diplomacy is at present focused on developing and consolidating relations with the United States, Russia, Turkey, with the three Asian superpowers Japan, China and India, and with South Africa and Brazil, shortly the G20.
2. The complexity and interdependence of global crises today is too far-reaching for a state to deal with single-handedly. Solutions

depend above all on increased international cooperation and the strength of the international system.

We have invested much effort in our capacity to be an active member of the international community and to enlarge our network of contacts accordingly. Our existing specialised instruments - dialogue, development cooperation, humanitarian aid, peace building and the promotion of human rights - have proven their worth but, must be interlinked.

3. Parliament is constantly pushing Government Institutions towards more management by performance. "Reviews of effectiveness" for all government activities were even anchored in the Federal Constitution. We therefore started to continuously introduce resource management tools accordingly.
4. Global change has an influence on our citizens and their expectations. Our citizens want a consistently high quality of service. If in trouble, they expect consular crisis management to give them top priority at all times. Perceptions on performance of service delivery are picked up by the media and can affect the reputation of the Foreign Ministry. We had to reorient our self to a demand-driven consular service provider.

Our Reforms started in 2006. Due to budget restrictions we were forced to rethink the resources at and for representations abroad. We launched a project to reorient resource management responsibilities. Its result is, among others, that today; embassies are responsible for local budgets that are up to 10 times their previous size. These budgets were previously under the responsibility of HQ.

The success of the program motivated us to extend NPM criteria to areas at HQ and to adjust our structure. The goal is to gear state

operations and action increasingly to measurable performance, to delegate tasks and responsibilities to appropriate administrative units; and to improve their efficiency.

By 2008, reform at the FDFA headquarters had involved the Directorate for Development and Cooperation (SDC), by 2009 the Directorate for Resources and the General Secretariat, and by 2010 the Directorate for Political Affairs and the Directorate for International law. Finally, an ordinance dated 15 May 2011 is leading to the creation of a new Directorate merging all Consular Services into one unit.

By 2011 the Directorate of Resources has transformed into a Joint Service Centre for the entire Department integrating all support services (personnel, finance, logistics; language and legal services), previously attached to operational units. Leadership support tools, on the other hand, like audit controlling and communication units, were centred on the Board of Directors (in the General Secretariat).

But let me focus, in the light of this conference on diplomacy and development. The reform process at the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) was geared to increasing result orientation, efficiency and presence in the Field. The formerly more independent thematic sections were dissolved and integrated into reshaped operational directorates, those number was reduced by one third.

A Global Cooperation Department designs policy approaches, runs global programs on food security, climate change, migration and water, and organises collaboration with international development institutions. They are working closely with the Directorate for Political Affairs.

A Regional Cooperation Department supports the implementation of global programs and is implementing programs on poverty reduction aimed at achieving the Millennium Development Goals in the regions.

For the release of the new 2013-16 financial bill, the FDFA is for the first time presenting a joint strategy paper for international humanitarian aid, technical and development cooperation, cooperation with emerging Eastern European countries, and economic and trade in development cooperation.

Conclusions

By 2011, not a single unit is still working as it did 5 years ago, years that have stretched staff's capacities to its limits. With these reforms however, we believe that Switzerland has effectively responded to global challenges. But let me introduce on more challenge of ours.

As Tom Nides mentioned in his introductory remarks yesterday, diplomatic and consular skill and success or failure is more complex and cannot be linked with short term resource allocation only. Nor can it be measured only by results achieved. Much more, the staff members' competence, leadership and political flexibility and commitment will be steering elements.

The motivation of our staff to build networks, show engagement, seize opportunities, work overtime and defend our interests and positions on a daily basis remains our most valuable asset and is of utmost priority. A central piece of work, therefore, remains to be completed. A new personnel policy should provide the framework for supporting the Department's efforts.

We are still making progress towards finalizing these efforts, guaranteeing that qualified staff is at hand, offering remuneration based on responsibilities and enabling flexible career planning and transparency. We eventually aim for the FDFA to become a modern competitive employer with highly specialized personnel allowing Switzerland to respond to the global challenges of the 21st century.

Thank you very much for your attention